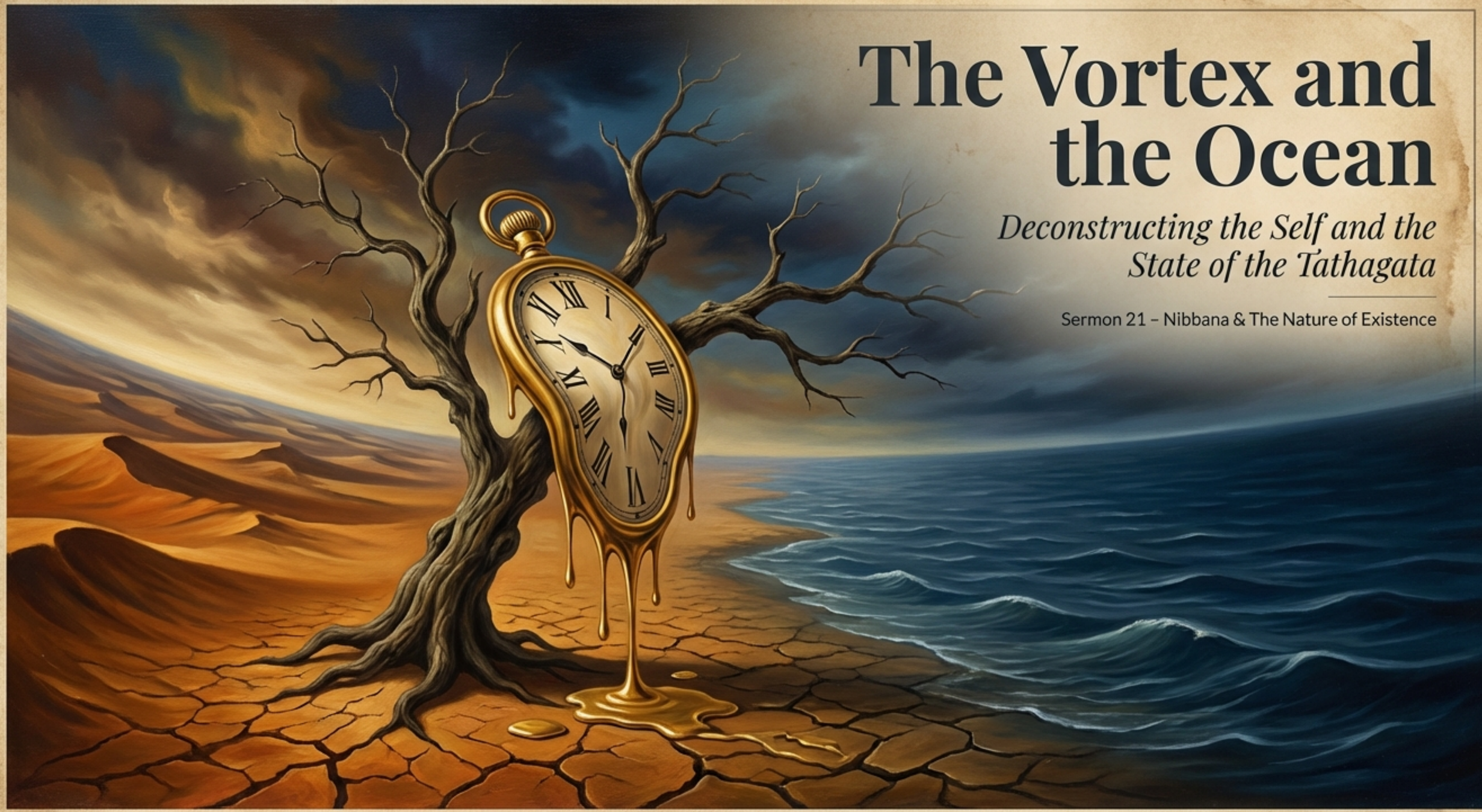

The Vortex and the Ocean

Deconstructing the Self and the State of the Tathagata

Sermon 21 – Nibbana & The Nature of Existence

NotebookLM

The Silence of the Buddha

The wandering ascetics demanded an answer to the 'Tetralemma'. They asked four logical propositions about the Enlightened One:

- 1. Does he exist after death?
- 2. Does he not exist?
- 3. Does he both exist and not exist?
- 4. Does he neither exist nor not exist?

The Buddha remained silent. To answer is to accept the false premise that there was a 'Person' to begin with.

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The Illusion of the ‘Being’

Questions about the future of a ‘Being’ (*Satta*) assume a Being exists now. But there is no static entity. What we call a Being is just a label for a process—like a swarm.

“Why do we say that craving is concealing the fact of sensation? Because craving is on the side of arising.”

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The Samsaric Vortex

Consciousness and Name-and-Form interplay like a whirlpool. They feed each other in a feedback loop. This cyclic friction creates the illusion of a solid entity.

The vortex is not separate from the water; it is just a 'perverted state' of the water struggling against the mainstream.

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Craving is the Current

What keeps the vortex spinning? Craving (*Tanha*). As long as there is the ‘suction’ of desire and aversion, the friction continues.

“Craving is the invisible combustible fuel that keeps the raging Samsaric force-fire alive.”

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Five Heaps, No Owner

We identify as the **Five Aggregates**, but they are just drawers:

1. Form
2. Feeling
3. Perception
4. Preparations (Sankhara)
5. Consciousness

Insight:
When analyzed, there is no “owner” of the drawers. There are just the drawers. “This is not mine, this I am not, this is not my Self.”

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The Stump of Reality

The Tathagata (Enlightened One) has cut the roots of craving. Like an uprooted palm tree, the potential for future growth (rebirth) is destroyed.

“Cut at the root, made like a palm stump, done away with so that it is no longer subject to future arising.”

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When the Vortex Stops

When the spinning stops, where does the vortex go? Does it go North? South? Does it merge with the ocean?

Key Concept:
It doesn't 'go' anywhere. It simply ceases to be a vortex. It returns to being just the ocean. The 'perversion" of the water has ended.

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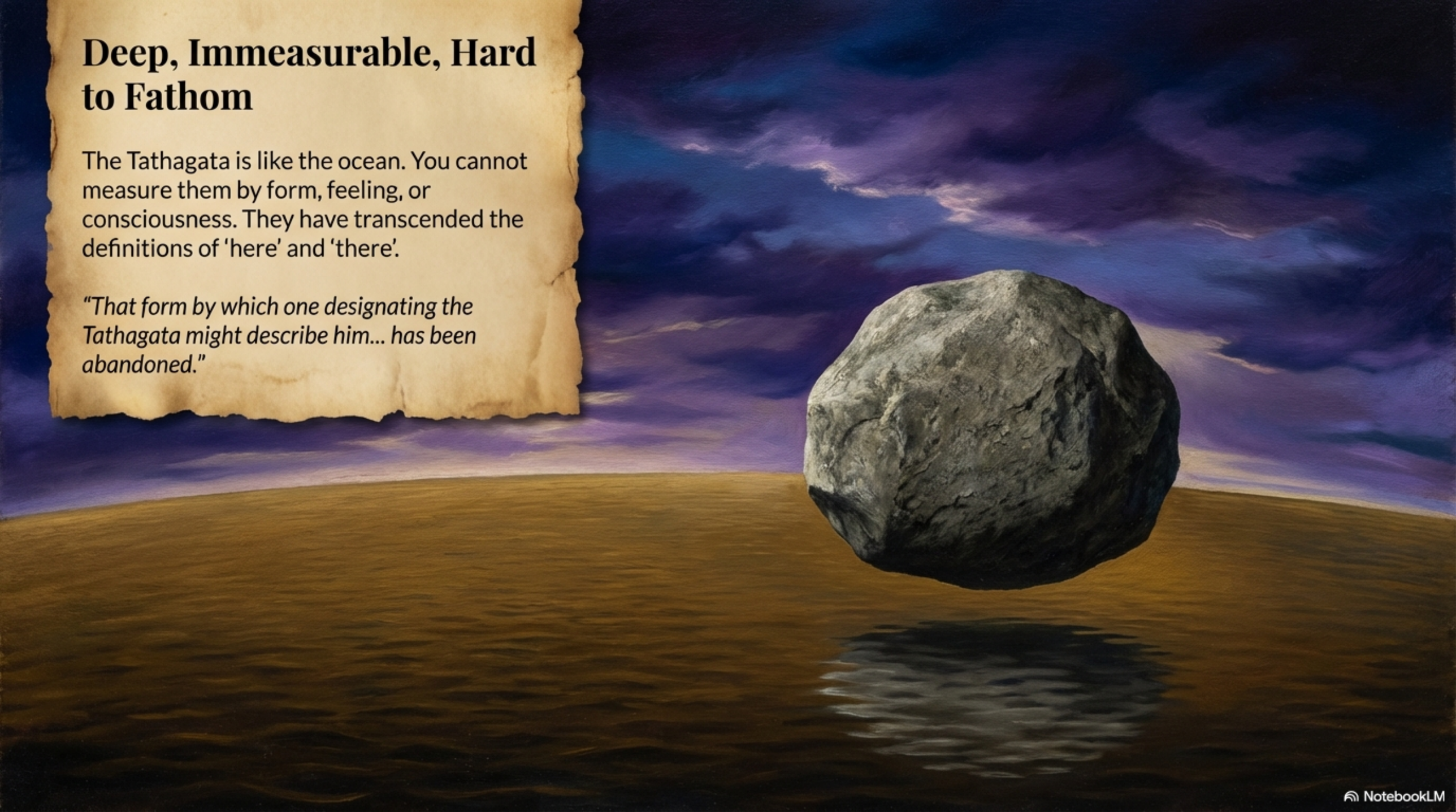
Deep, Immeasurable, Hard to Fathom

The Tathagata is like the ocean. You cannot measure them by form, feeling, or consciousness. They have transcended the definitions of ‘here’ and ‘there’.

“That form by which one designating the Tathagata might describe him... has been abandoned.”



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The Failure of Language
Words require duality—this vs. that.
A ‘price’ requires a buyer and seller.
A ‘vortex’ requires a conflict of currents.
The Tathagata is free from duality.
Therefore, no words apply.
Insight: To say ‘He exists’ is too solid. To say ‘He does not exist’ suggests annihilation. Both fall short of the reality of cessation.
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Childish Games

We are like children building sandcastles (our lives, our identities). We defend them as ‘Mine!’ But the wise one kicks them over and scatters the sand.

Metaphor: The destruction of the sandcastle is the destruction of craving. *“Scatter form, demolish it, shatter it, put it out of play.”*

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The Illusion of ‘Inside’

The earth element inside the body is the same as the earth element outside. The air in the lungs is just a draft wind passing through.

Insight: The ‘Self’ is just a temporary partition of elements. A vortex pulls external elements in, spins them, and ejects them. There is no permanent ‘I’ separate from the world.

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The Fire That Has Gone Out

‘Nibbana’ literally means ‘extinction’ (like a fire). It is not a place you go to; it is the cooling of a fever.

‘To say that he is reborn falls short of a reply... to say that he is not reborn falls short of a reply.’

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What the World Calls Real

"What the world takes as truth, the Noble Ones have seen as untruth."

Key Concept: The "Vortex" feels real to the one drowning in it. To the one on the shore, it is just water behaving chaotically.

Enlightenment is the return to "Suchness" (Tathata)—reality as it is, without distortion.

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Nibbana is the End of Craving

The ultimate goal is not to 'become' something else, but to stop the whirling. To scatter the pile of form, feeling, and perception.

'For the destruction of craving, Radha, is Nibbana.'

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